(d) No, Sir. NELP rounds blocks are offered through international competitive bidding system on the basis of transparent and quantifiable Bid Evaluation Criteria (BEC) indicated in Notice Inviting Offers (NIO). There is a level playing field for award of blocks to public sector and private companies. The blocks are awarded to successful bidders based of BEC.

Gas contract to GSPCC

2127. SHRI KANJIBHAI PATEL:
SHRI PARSHOTTAM KHODABHAI RUPALA:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether bids were invited by Panna Mukta Tapti (PMT) JV in April 2006 from various companies;

(b) whether the entire gas was sold to Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) in spite of the fact that the bid of Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (GSPCL) was the highest amongst the bidders; if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the State Government of Gujarat has represented to the Central Government to follow the rules of tender procedure and give the offer of gas to GSPCL; and

(d) if so, the action taken by the Central Government on the representation?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA): (a) and (b) The Production Sharing Contract (PSC) signed between the Government and the Joint Venture (JV) provides that the entire gas would be sold to the Government nominee.

However, during 2004-05, Government allowed PMT JV to directly sell 4.6 mmscmd gas, while the remaining about 6 mmscmd gas continued to be supplied to power and fertilizer consumers through GAIL. Further, it was decided that the position would be reviewed at the end of the year. In the meantime, perhaps on the understanding that the gas being marketed by GAIL might be released for direct marketing to JV from 2006-07, PMT JV solicited Expression of Interests (EoI) from prospective buyers to purchase gas up to 4 mmscmd from 1st April, 2006 for a period of two years with a caveat that the JV reserved the right to decide the quantity to be sold. As informed by PMT JV, GSPC and another buyer offered the highest price for this gas. The issue of continuing gas supplies to the power and fertilizer sector consumers by GAIL beyond 31.3.2006 was reviewed in the Ministry in March 2006 and it was decided that this arrangement needed to be continued for a further period of 2 years, *i.e.*, up to 31.3.2008, as then there were no alternative sources of gas supplies and any disruption in gas supplies would have resulted in idling of the existing assets in these important sectors.

Subsequently, it was decided in 2007 that, in accordance with the provisions of the PSC, all gas produced by PMT JV would be sold to Government nominee, *i.e.*, GAIL, from 2008-09. Accordingly, the entire production of PMT JV is being supplied to GAIL from 1.4.2008.

(c) and (d) This Ministry had received through Prime Minister's Office a copy of the letter dated 8.3.06 addressed to the Prime Minister by Members of Parliament. As mentioned above, it has been decided in 2007 that, from 2008-09, all gas produced by PMT JV should be supplied to GAIL for marketing according to Government's directions.

Daily wage earning in rural household

2128. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA:
SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI:

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 2718 given in the Rajya Sabha on 28th July, 2009 and state:

(a) the reasons for wage inequalities;

(b) whether the wage structure reflects gender and caste bias;

(c) if so, the steps taken to alleviate the wage inequalities; and

(d) what are current wage earnings of SC/ST/OBC categories?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI PRADEEP JAIN): (a) to (c) Under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the appropriate Governments fix/revise minimum wages in respect of scheduled employments under their respective jurisdiction. The minimum wages are not fixed on the basis of gender or caste. However, there are different rates of minimum wages, across various employments, regions and States which is due to differences in socio-economic and agro-climatic conditions, prices of essential conditions, paying capacity, productivity and local conditions influencing the wage rate.

In order to reduce the disparity in minimum wages across the country, the Central Government fixes a National Floor Level Minimum Wage. It is a non-statutory measure, whereby the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations are requested to ensure that the minimum wages fixed/revised by them are atleast at par with the National floor Level Minimum wage.

(d) The current wage earning of Scheduled Caste (SC)/Scheduled Tribe (ST)/Other Backward Class (OBC) categories is given at Statement-I to III.